TRANSFER OF TROOPS

The Council of the Republic had little more authority than the government. The Communists had withdrawn from the Council at its first meeting, on October 20, and their press had succeeded in creating an impression that the Council was a part of the government. But the government departments continued to function, largely by inertia, without relation to the policy of the Cabinet. Thus I remained in close touch with the War Ministry, which was facing a serious problem. During the Kornilov mutiny a division stationed in Finland had massacred most of its officers and arrested the others. It was now in a state of open rebellion, threatening to march on Viborg and Helsinki. Since there was no way to bring the division to heel, the War Ministry decided to transfer it to the front. That step could be justified by military considerations: There was no real danger of a German attack through Sweden and Finland, while the Northern Front needed reinforcements. Since the troops stationed in Finland belonged to the Northern Front, the Ministry asked General Cheremissov to take the Finnish division into his reserve, billet it where it would not do much harm, and send other troops to Finland.

The Commander of the Northern Front shoved the order at me, saying peevishly, "They have mixed up papers in Petrograd. I have no use for this damned division and am not interested in politics. This is a dish for you, Mr. Commissar." I read the memorandum and replied, "This is a service order. I will do my best to carry it out but I shall need the aid of your staff."

"That you can have," Cheremissov snapped. "All I want is to have nothing to do with the business."

I prepared an order to the Finnish division to be ready to move to the front in fifteen days. The order included an explanation of the strategic situation and stressed the need for equitable rotation of regiments between service in the rear garrisons and at the front. Cheremissov signed the order reluctantly and I countersigned it, attaching to it the resolutions of front regiments demanding rotation with military units at the rear.

The Communist papers in Petrograd published the reply of the Finnish division: "The division has dedicated itself to the defense of

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1917, the new government sent him to Brest-Litovsk, to serve as military adviser to the Russian delegation in peace negotiations. He went to the conference hoping to be permitted to defend the honor of Russia. When he realized that Bolshevist delegates, headed by Trotsky, were ready to sell out the vital interests of the country and were interested only in the preservation of the power of their party, he blew his brains out.